

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for King County Juvenile Court**

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### **Why do I need to sign in at the court, and where do I do this?**

When you arrive at court, it is very important for the youth to sign in so they can be placed on the list to be called for a hearing; however, it is also useful for the family to sign in so the judge can see that people are there to support the youth. You sign in at the “Information Desk” on your right as you enter the court waiting room.

### **Who should attend court with my child?**

Bringing along support people will be helpful for a number of reasons. First, having multiple people attend court hearings for the youth will show the judge that your child has a good network of support. The most important hearing to have people attend would be the Disposition hearing where the judge gives the youth a court order. Also, because the court process can be confusing and you may feel overwhelmed, having support people there can help you get through the process.

### **Why does my child's attorney want to talk to my child alone?**

Attorneys (lawyers) working in juvenile court are there to represent the youth, not the family or parent. Because the attorney is representing the youth, they are obligated by law to hear what the youth has to say about their case in a confidential setting. This means that the youth's attorney will most likely want to speak to your child alone at some point. The youth can also request that the attorney talk with the parent; and the youth can request a different attorney if they feel they are not being helped.

### **How do I request a translator for court hearings?**

You can request a translator when you are notified of your court date, which will either be through a phone call or through a letter in the mail. Have someone who speaks English call the probation screening office (206-205-9595) to tell them your name, court date and that you would like a translator. If you know who your probation counselor is, you can also ask them to request a translator for court.

### **What are my rights as a parent in a juvenile offender case?**

Parent/guardians have an important role in juvenile court. They have the right to ask questions of the judge and probation counselor and they have the right to offer their opinion about what will work best for their child. Parents also have the right to be a part of the court process and their child's probation case plan.

### **What happens in a court hearing and when is it appropriate for me to talk?**

A court hearing involves a lot of technical language and procedure and it may sometimes look like nothing is happening. Then, all at once, the judge will begin proceedings and things can go very, very quickly. The judge will directly ask a parent/guardian to offer information and/or their opinion when it is appropriate.

### **Is it possible to join a court hearing by phone?**

Yes, in many cases you can join a court hearing by phone. The court recognizes that it can be difficult for parents/guardians to get off of work in order to attend a hearing. You can let the youth's intake probation counselor know if you would like to join a hearing by phone.

### **How will my child be assigned an attorney and will this cost money?**

The youth will automatically be assigned a public defender, and the youth will usually meet with their public defender for the first time when they go to court for the first time. It is the family's responsibility to pay the public defender fees. Fees will be assigned based on your family income.

### **Will information I share with my child's probation counselor be used to file new charges against my child?**

Information you share with the probation counselor can be used to file new charges against your child but this will depend on the probation counselor. New charges files against the youth will be part of their permanent record.

### **How many times will my child need to return to court?**

The number of times a youth will need to return to court for additional hearings will depend on a number of factors, including the type of charge they have and whether they decide to plead guilty or not guilty. There are many different types of hearings, but for a juvenile offender case the youth will most likely experience at least some of the following hearings: First Appearance, Arraignment, Case Setting and Disposition.

### **Can the court or Probation Counselor make my child follow my rules?**

The court or probation counselor cannot make the youth follow home rules. A probation counselor can assist the family in using effective communication strategies, and provide tools the family can use to encourage the youth to make better decisions.

### **Is probation the same as an At Risk Youth Petition (ARY)?**

No, probation is assigned by a judge when a youth has a criminal charge. An ARY petition is filed by the family when they would like the court's support with a difficult to manage child. More information on ARY petitions is available at (206) 205-9732.

### **How does having a court record affect my child's future regarding housing, jobs and education?**

A court record can negatively impact housing, employment and in finding funding for education. Contact Street Youth Legal Advocates (SYLAW) to obtain more information about getting juvenile records sealed: (206) 659-5029. [www.sylaw.org](http://www.sylaw.org). In some cases, a family may not be eligible for public housing if a youth has a felony on their record.

For more information on the King County Juvenile Court Process go to <http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/Juvenilecourt.aspx>